

## Prevalence of Depressive Symptoms among Older Arab Individuals in the Middle East

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### Abstract

**PURPOSE:** This quantitative study attempted to describe levels of health, mental health, and depression among older Arab people age 60 and over and examine the factors that best impact individual's levels of depression.

**METHODS:** A sample of 165 participants age 60 years old and over were recruited from both Jordan (n=65) and Egypt (n=100). Participants in the study received and completed a self-administered survey measuring demographic and personal characteristics and these standardized measures: the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CESD) (Orme, Reis & Herz, 1986), IOWA Self-Assessment Inventory (Morris & Buckwalter, 1988), Multidimensional Health Locus of Control Scale (Wallston, Wallston, & DeVellis, 1978), and the Geriatric Scale of Recent Life Events (Kiyak, Liang, & Kahana, 1976). The survey was translated to Arabic and back translated to English to ensure consistency.

**RESULTS:** The majority of participants were females (62.4%), married (58.2%), and unemployed (81.8%). Their ages ranged between 60-90 years old (Mean=71, SD=7.59). Furthermore, about one third had no formal education (34.5%) while the remaining could read/write (28.5%), had two years of college/associate degree (28.5%), or an undergraduate degree (8.5%). The results also show that 84.2% of participants reported a score of 16 and above, thus indicating a high depressive symptom based on the CESD (Mean=24.91, SD=9.54, Range=0-60).

Furthermore, the results of a factorial ANOVA show significant differences in levels of depression based on gender [ $F(1, 161) = 4.18, p < .05$ ] and marital status [ $F(1, 161) = 7.22, p < .01$ ]. Male and married participants reported significantly lower depression compared to females and unmarried participants, respectively. Finally, the results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis show that depression was a function of four predictors ( $F=12.27, p < .001$ ). These include emotional balance ( $\beta = -.28$ ), internal health locus of control ( $\beta = .29$ ), gender ( $\beta = -.17$ ), and negative life events ( $\beta = .17$ ). Overall, these factors accounted for 24% of the variance in depression ( $R = .49$ ).

**IMPLICATIONS:** The results of this study are alarming. They show a significantly high percentage of older Arab individuals suffering from high depressive symptoms that require immediate follow up and perhaps a clinical intervention. These results also revealed four factors as significant predictors of depression among this population. These findings could assist clinicians and mental health professionals in planning effective mental health intervention strategies tailored towards old people. However, a larger

systematic study in a broad representative sample of Middle Eastern Arab is needed to further validate these findings. Further implications will be discussed.

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